

approaching the consideration of all such problems with a new light and an increasing disposition to limit the field of inquiry. He will also see that much that he took to relate to problems of the nature of objects within experience, really relates to the problem of experience itself. And he will probably agree with Kant in thinking that the difficulty of investigating this special problem is a difficulty not of kind but of degree, and this whether his conclusions are those of Kant or none at all. Just at present, when the tendencies of science are increasingly in the direction of general conceptions, it is difficult to avoid feeling that some knowledge of what Kant really taught ought to be far more widely diffused among scientific men than is actually the case.

R. B. HALDANE

RECENT ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

The Coues Check List of North American Birds. Second Edition, Revised to Date, and entirely Rewritten, under direction of the Author, with a Dictionary of the Etymology, Orthography, and Orthoepy of the Scientific Names, the Concordance of Previous Lists, and a Catalogue of his Ornithological Publications. 8vo, pp. 1-165. (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1882.)

Beiträge zur Ornithologie Südafrikas. Von Dr. Emil Holub and Aug. von Pelzeln. (Wien: Hölder, 1882.)

DR. ELLIOTT COUES is well known for the labo-
rious works on ornithological literature which have flowed from his pen during the last ten years. No fact seems too trivial for record, no labour too great for this author when once he sets his mind to exhaust the literary history of any group of birds, or the ornithological fauna of a country. We have just received a copy of his second Check List of North American Birds, which appears to us to be much the most complete work of its kind which has yet appeared. An entire list of the Birds of North America, as politically defined, is here given, and we perceive that the number of recorded species has increased from 283 in 1814 (Wilson) to 888 in the present volume. Mr. Ridgway's estimate in 1880 was 924, but this total is reached by including in the North American List several species which are found in Mexico, as well as in the islands of Socorro and Guadeloupe. Dr. Coues considers that there are not more than thirty out of his 888 species "whose claims to be recognised by sub-specific names can be seriously questioned. Pp. 1-22 are occupied with the Introduction, a comparison of the present edition with the former Check List published in 1874, and a very interesting treatise on the "Use of Names." American ornithologists have so long ago adopted the trinomial system of nomenclature that it has become part and parcel of their writings, but so far it has not been adopted by Old World ornithologists, at least in the same sense as that in which the Americans employ the three names. To have to label a specimen *Icterus melanocephalus auduboni* (Gir.), Coues, is certainly more awkward than simply writing *Icterus auduboni*, and if the race is not worthy of a separate name it would seem better to suppress it altogether, and to quote the species as *Icterus melanocephalus*. The system too appears to us likely to bolster up sub-species and races which are not entitled to such recognition, as, for instance, in the case of the com-

mon Barn-Owl (*Aluco flammeus pratincola*), and the Magpie (*Pica rustica hudsonica*), which are not distinguishable even as sub-species from the European *Aluco* (*potius Strix*) *flammeus*, and *Pica rustica*, but seem to be retained by American authors under their system of trinomial nomenclature, chiefly because they have been once separated and have been called *Aluco pratincola* and *Pica hudsonica*. The Yellow-billed Magpie of California is placed upon the same footing as *Pica hudsonica*, and receives the trinomial epithet of *Pica rustica nuttalli*, whereas we have never yet seen proof of any gradation between it and *Pica rustica*, so that it would appear to be quite a good species, and entitled to full specific rank. These are small points on which European ornithologists are always likely to differ from their American brethren, but there can only be one opinion about the great value of the etymological portion of the present work, which has been most carefully written by Dr. Coues, the classical derivation of every generic and every specific name being most carefully given; and in this portion of his task the author acknowledges the obligations which he is under to Mrs. S. Olivia Weston-Aiken, "who cordially shared with him the labour of the philological investigation."

We are pleased to see that several etymological corrections recently set forward by Mr. Henry Wharton are adopted by Dr. Coues, who handsomely acknowledges the assistance given by Mr. Wharton. The latter gentleman is well-known in this country for his researches into the classical derivation of the names of birds, and he is now Secretary to a Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union, which is shortly about to issue a standard list of British Birds, in which special attention will be paid to the etymology of the names.

We have also on our table an account of the Ornithological Results of Dr. Holub's explorations in Southern Africa, written by the traveller himself, assisted by Herr von Pelzeln, of the Vienna Museum. This book contains a large number of illustrations, representative of bird-life in Southern Africa, the woodcuts being so well executed that we are able to gain a good idea of the nesting, habits, and economy of many South African species in their native haunts. Excellent accounts of the habits, especially of the breeding of a great number of species are given, and ostrich-farmers will find much that will interest them in the account of the South African ostrich. Several anatomical notes are dispersed throughout the volume, and many good figures of skeletons are given, including two plates devoted to the tongues of birds. Of the new species figured *Drymoica holubi* (Taf. I.) is scarcely likely to be really undescribed amongst the numerous *Cisticola* of Southern Africa, and *Lanius pyrrhostictus* (Taf. II.) is certainly only the female of *L. collaris*. All such works as Dr. Holub's add much to our knowledge of the geographical distribution of birds, especially when, as in the present instance, they are accompanied by a good map showing the country in which the collection was made.

Capt. Blakiston and Mr. H. Pryer have just issued a revised list of the "Birds of Japan," and it forms a most useful epitome of our present knowledge of the ornithology of this interesting country. Three hundred and twenty-six species are enumerated, notes being given on their geographical distribution in the different islands of Japan, and it would appear from the frequent mention of dif-

ferent museums that the Japanese have adopted this mode of education along with their other advances in civilisation. One of the most interesting features of the present list is the additional knowledge acquired by Mr. Snow's visit to the Kuril Islands, which locality, however, does not seem to be very rich in land-birds, though many wading-birds—gulls and petrels—appear to have been noticed. The authors have carefully identified all the species which have come under their notice, and in doubtful cases have forwarded specimens to England for comparison, so that little fault can be found with the present list, which seems to be the result of much good sound work, and we congratulate the authors on having placed the ornithology of Japan on such a satisfactory footing. A comparison of some of the smaller owls with the type specimens in the British Museum would appear desirable, and we have no doubt that Mr. Bowdler Sharpe would assist the authors, if specimens were forwarded to him for identification.

ICELAND

Summer Travelling in Iceland. By John Coles, F.R.A.S. (London: Murray, 1882.)

By Fell and Fjord. By E. G. Oswald. (London: Blackwood, 1882.)

THE most prominent—we ought perhaps to say, the one redeeming—feature of Mr. Coles's work is the fact that he occupied himself by taking observations of heights, temperatures, distances, and magnetic variations while travelling in Iceland. This is rarely done because of the difficulty of carrying instruments over a very rough, and in some places pathless, country. The result has been that the map appended to "Summer Travelling" is perhaps the most accurate which has yet appeared. Mount Paul, and a few more-familiar names, are strangely enough not inserted, but, on the other hand, the heights of the principal mountains and highlands are given in English feet; the crater of Askja is shown of its proper form; and the details of the Sprengisandr route are mapped. At the same time, the map is not so *clear* as that of Gunnlaugsson, who was careful to indicate the different surface soils—lava, sand, heath, &c.—by differences both of shading and of colour. If those who travel in a little-known country would provide themselves with a good aneroid, compass, and thermometer, and would learn before starting how to use them, and maintain a habit of using them constantly while on their travels, like Mr. Coles, it would be to the great advantage of science.

According to Mr. Coles, the magnetic variation in the extreme west of Iceland is 43° W., while on the east coast it is 34° W., and the compass error in different parts of the islands will thus vary by three-quarters of a point. Thus in the W. of the island the compass box must be turned until the N. end of the magnetic needle is over N.W., while in the E. of the island the N. end would require to be placed over N.W. by N., and then all the points marked on the card would indicate true bearings.

We may mention also a capital plan of the Haukadalr Geysirs, better, we believe, than any one which has appeared since that of Baring Gould.

Apart from the observations, the book contains nothing which is new to Icelandic travellers, or to those acquainted

with the literature relating to travel in that country. The description of the Thingvellir-Geysir-Hekla-Krisuvik route, is as old as the hills, and becomes infinitely wearisome from much repetition. Four chapters out of eleven take us only as far as Hekla, and then the author did not ascend it. The journey across the Sprengisandr was quite uneventful, and the detour to Askja was without interest—that is, it did not bring to light any facts not previously observed by Prof. Johnstrup, Lieut. Maroc, or Mr. W. G. Lock. Also when we read that "Summer Travelling in Iceland" is a "narrative of two journeys across the island by unfrequented routes," we are disappointed to find the less frequented route without any interest, and the other by no means "unfrequented," but in fact the ordinary mail route between Akureyri and Reykjavik.

During the last twenty years books on Iceland have multiplied too rapidly, and there is no need for another work on the subject, unless it deals with some special features of the country scientifically, or unless it is a record of exploration, like plucky Mr. Watts's record of a journey "Across the Vatna Jökull." If somebody will further explore this tract of unknown country larger than Lincolnshire, or ascend and measure virgin peaks, or trace the lava streams of Koëtla to their source, or minutely survey the Krafla district, we shall welcome their records with open arms.

"By Fell and Fjord" is a bright, pleasantly written book, by a lady who has visited Iceland three times, has travelled over some of the less frequented paths, and has entered with wonderful spirit into the nature of the weird volcanic surroundings, and the tone and temper of the people, the language, and the literature. Miss Oswald is so fond of everything connected with the island, that she has braved discomforts which few ladies would willingly face. Her bravery impresses us immensely: she never feared to ford the most dangerous glacier river, never quaked while crossing the most treacherous bog, and was never discouraged by misfortunes caused by bad weather or a mistaken route. And then she is genuinely enthusiastic about the scenery, the wild gipsy life, and the cordial kindly people.

G. F. RODWELL

OUR BOOK SHELF

Madeira: its Scenery, and How to see it. (London: Stanford, 1882.)

A USEFUL handbook to Madeira has just been published by Messrs. Stanford. It can hardly lay claim to be a scientific work, yet a fair knowledge of botany and kindred subjects is pre-supposed to exist by its author, Miss Ellen Taylor, and much of the interest in the excursions detailed is due to the introduction of this element. It presents, in fact, a very marked improvement over ordinary handbooks, and the treatment of the natural history section is excellent.

There is little of history to relate, and even the discovery of the island, which took place as recently as the early part of the fifteenth century, is involved in some obscurity. The race is mixed, and the aristocracy at least seems to have been recruited from Italy, France, and Flanders. The island is entirely volcanic, and no rocks earlier than Miocene exist in it. When volcanic action ceased is unknown, but even the most recent lavas seem to have suffered great denudation—no vapours are now exhaled—and the island is profoundly quiescent save from occasional earthquakes, as in 1748. The vast